

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC Proclamation!

VOLUME 6
ISSUE 2
MARCH
APRIL
2005

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

The investigative judgment:

Your questions finally answered

CHRIS BADENHORST

The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record.

If you have ever dismissed your thoughts about the Investigative Judgment and the Adventist doctrine of the Sanctuary because they seemed too confusing to grasp, this article might help you understand them. The Investigative

Judgment is a major component of Adventism's 1844 Sanctuary theology as based on the denomination's interpretation of Daniel 8:14. Adventist Sanctuary theology is completely unique, and it is non-negotiable. No matter how much Adventists ignore or reinterpret it, it

remains the foundational doctrine of the church formulated by the pioneers within the first decade after the Great Disappointment.

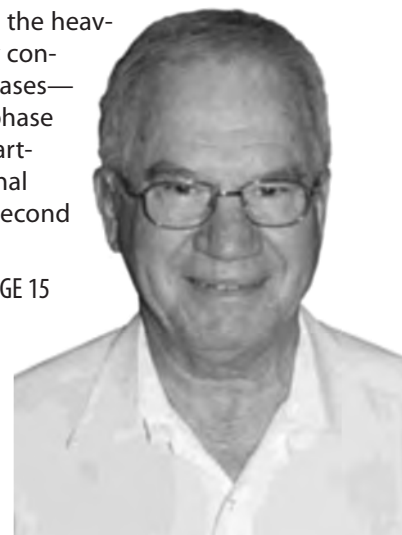
Two underlying, often confusing themes of the Investigative Judgment are *condemnation* and *justification*. To understand these we need to look at the "cleansing of the sanctuary" aspect of the church's 1844 doctrine. This doctrine teaches that Jesus is

currently in heaven "blotting out," or removing from the heavenly records, the sins of those who have passed the Investigative Judgment and placing their penalty on Satan who will pay it in the end. Only these people will be saved. "But before this can be accomplished," Mrs. White says, "there must be an examination of the books of record... The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment" (*The Great Controversy* [GC], 352).

Two Phases

Adventism interprets Christ's heavenly ministration according to its understanding of the Old Covenant sanctuary ritual in ancient Israel. It therefore states that Christ's ministration in the heavenly sanctuary consists of two phases—a provisional phase (in the first apartment) and a final phase (in the second apartment).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



Chris Badenhorst is a retired civil engineering technician who still works part time on one of South Africa's oil refineries in the city of Durban on the east coast. He is married with three step-children and one grandchild. His wife is also a former Adventist who shares his enthusiasm for the gospel of God's free grace. Although they are not members of a particular denomination, they attend a local Baptist church for worship and fellowship.

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

CONTENTS Confessions of a pastor's daughter JANICE O. BRANTLEY 3
Progressive revelation: What is it? DALE RATZLAFF 8
Is it wrong to be right? DIRK ANDERSON 12
My journey home SHONTAY GIPSON **Back page**



The freedom from falsehood COLLEEN TINKER

It was the middle of the night. Fear squeezed my 15-year-old heart; sleep was a stranger. "Dear Jesus," I begged, "please forgive all my sins, even the ones I can't remember. And please help me not to commit the unpardonable sin. Please, please, PLEASE!"

When would my name come up in the Investigative Judgment? I wondered. I knew if I had even one unconfessed, accidental sin, I would be lost.

Despairingly I thought of all the times my

Adventism for another sixteen years. One day in June, 1996, I read EGW's "divine" endorsement of William Miller's mistaken calculation that Jesus would return in 1843. God, she said, "was in the proclamation" of that erroneous date. He used Miller's false prediction to "arouse the people" to the point of accepting "truth" (*Early Writings*, p. 232)*. Not only was God supposedly "in" the false prediction, but she also said God held "his hand... over and hid a mistake in some of [Miller's] figures, so that none could see it" (*Review and Herald*, 1850-11-01)*. In other words, EGW claimed God purposely lied or deceived people in order to accomplish spiritual awakening. The end justified the means.

That day my cognitive dissonance began to resolve. God would not lie in order to manipulate people to respond to Him, nor would His prophets "credit" Him with lies.

I had to admit it: Ellen White was not misused or confused. Further, she wasn't merely "not a prophet." She claimed to be God's messenger, and she claimed God showed her the "views" she delivered. She was clearly a prophet—a false prophet.

Admitting Ellen White was a false prophet was the most significant factor—besides praying for the Holy Spirit's teaching—in clarifying Scripture for me. Passages I had previously had to ignore made sense, and the Bible began to be a consistent, unified book that exalted Jesus and His death and resurrection. The falsehoods I had learned were increasingly clear; they did not honor the all-sufficiency of Jesus and His shed blood.

In this issue Chris Badenhorst explains the church's Investigative Judgment doctrine and its implications for an Adventist's understanding of salvation. We also look at the reinterpreted version of the doctrine that says God is vindicating Himself to the universe. Dirk Anderson presents a question every Adventist should ask him/herself, and Dale Ratzlaff explains true "progressive revelation." Janice Brantley and Shontay Gipson share their stories of faith.

As you read, it is our prayer that you will see Jesus with new clarity. We pray you will understand the miracle of the cross and know the cleansing of His blood atoning for your sin. We pray you will experience the new birth and know the assurance that nothing can ever separate you "from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28).

*(References quoted in *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, Dale Ratzlaff, 1996, p. 84, 85)

Admitting Ellen White was a false prophet was the most significant factor—besides praying for the Holy Spirit's teaching—in clarifying Scripture for me.

Proclamation!

Founding Editor
Dale Ratzlaff

Editor
Colleen Tinker

Copy Editor
Cristine Cole

Design Editor
Richard Tinker

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

Board of Directors

Dale Ratzlaff, President, CFO

Colleen Tinker, Secretary

Bruce Heinrich

Carolyn Ratzlaff

Richard Tinker

Published by Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 905, Redlands, CA 92373

©2005 Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.
All rights reserved.

Phone (909) 794-9804

Toll Free (877) 349-6984

www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

www.FormerAdventist.com

E-mail: proclamation@gmail.com

conversation slipped into secular subjects during the sacred Sabbath hours. Why couldn't I stop sinning? What if I were in the middle of a sin when my name came up for judgment?

"PLEASE just make me good!" I begged God—to no avail.

Fourteen years later I was teaching at Gem State Academy in Idaho. The word was out; Desmond Ford had presented his scholarly evidence to church leaders proving that the Investigative Judgment as Ellen White (EGW) had vividly described it in *The Great Controversy* had no Biblical support. Somehow I got my hands on a copy of his defense, and I read it with the book of Daniel opened beside it. When I finished I knew Ford was right: the Investigative Judgment was not in the Bible.

I still believed I needed to eliminate sin from my life in order to be saved, but at least I no longer lay awake wondering if one forgotten transgression would keep me out of heaven.

Oddly enough, discovering that the foundational doctrine of Adventism—the one most dependent on Ellen White's revelations—was false did not destroy my confidence in her prophetic gift. Instead I rationalized: the church founders had "misused" her; she grew in her understanding of truth—progressive revelation, we called it. Yet even those later messages contained error.

I lived with the cognitive dissonance of desiring Biblical truth while simultaneously embracing

Confessions of a pastor's daughter

JANICE O. BRANTLEY

I was born exactly seven minutes before my identical twin sister, and thirteen months after my older sister. My parents, of West-Indian descent, were careful to instill within us middle-class American values and also the assumption that because we were Seventh-day Adventists we were more fortunate than others. My father was a devout Seventh-day Adventist minister and educator, and we were reared in a traditional Adventist lifestyle including daily doses of the *Testimonies* or other compilations that were supposed to have been divinely inspired and written by Ellen G. White, our church's prophet. As children who were naturally compliant and submissive, my twin and I believed and accepted everything that we were taught. My older sister, however, was free-spirited, inquisitive, and had a mind of her own. Only later did I realize that my passive acceptance of our belief system had resulted in my inability to decipher clearly truth from error, thus giving me a false sense of security.

I was home-schooled for two years, baptized at the tender age of eight, and attended Adventist elementary schools in Virginia, Ohio, and New Jersey before enrolling at Pine Forge Academy in Pennsylvania. After graduation I entered Columbia Union College where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. I was employed at Washington Adventist Hospital for nearly seven years, during which time I married a handsome and charming Adventist gentleman. Within days I was shocked into the realization that I had made a tragic mistake. In spite of our toxic union, we were blessed with two beautiful children, a daughter and a son. Because of my strong commitment to

Christ and to the counsel of Ellen White, however, I felt obligated to remain in my marital bondage for fourteen long, traumatic years. Yet I felt the presence of God through it all, and I emerged from it more determined than ever to follow Him wherever He might lead.

As a single mom I faced many unanticipated challenges, but with the miraculous assistance of my heavenly Father, I was able to raise my children into adulthood with reasonably sound minds and bodies. During one of my occasional visits with my parents, who resided in Huntsville, Alabama, I was introduced to a recently baptized Adventist gentleman to whom my father had given Bible studies. After several months of getting to know each other via long distance phone calls and a few visits that he made to my home in Columbia, Maryland, he asked me to become his wife and the mother of his sons, ages ten and eleven. After

Janice Brantley is a registered nurse who has two grown children. She and her husband Ken live in Ardmore, Tennessee, and attend Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Today Janice is rejoicing in her newfound understanding of the truth of God's Word.



Confessions

much thought and prayer, I accepted his proposal, gave up my life-long nursing career, disposed of most of my earthly possessions, and moved from my townhouse to his home in Alabama. My decision to become the stepparent of two extremely active youngsters, after rearing two of my own to adulthood, proved to be more of a challenge than I could have ever imagined.

My relationship with my new husband was initially void of overt conflict, and my second marriage appeared to have been much more promising than the first. Shortly after the graduation of my youngest stepson from Oakwood

...my passive acceptance of our belief system had resulted in my inability to clearly decipher truth from error, thus giving me a false sense of security.

Academy, my husband informed me that he wanted a divorce so that he could remarry his first wife! That revelation hit me like a bombshell! In retrospect, however, I shouldn't have been surprised. He and I had slowly drifted apart in our religiosity. His interest in Adventism and Christianity had grown cold, and my reaction to our differences was to immerse myself even more deeply into the writings of Ellen White and to become more active, more conservative, and more historic in my Adventism. After all, so much of what Mrs. White wrote was indeed comforting, and I was desperate for anything that would fill the void in my life and bring comfort to my aching soul.

After giving up my career, my home, and most of my earthly possessions and devoting eight years of my life and my love to my husband and his sons, only to be told that I was no longer wanted or needed, seemed more than I could bear. What was I to do, and where was I to go? In desperation I fell on my knees and poured out my heart to Jesus Christ, my friend who promised never to leave me or forsake me. I also decided that I should never trust another man on this planet who asked for my hand in marriage. My desire was only to please God and to become absolutely perfect for Him.

After moving out of the beautiful home in which I had invested so much love, time, and energy, I joined a group of "historic" Adventists, living in my assigned, old, single-wide mobile home in the communal country setting in the back hills of Tennessee. This self-supporting Adventist ministry named "Missionary Educational and Evangelistic Training" (MEET) emphasizes health and dress reform and perfectionism.

I felt God wanted me to promote the health message. After all, I had been taught that it was the right hand of the

gospel. In my effort to please God, I became fanatical in practically every facet of my life, wearing only long dresses, becoming a vegan, refraining from all make-up and jewelry, not eating between meals, and trying desperately to be sure that I had no sin in my life. Like most members of the commune, I also pulled away from traditional Adventism after being convinced that most Adventists were in apostasy. I eagerly accepted these beliefs and felt sorry for those who were not living up to the "blueprint" of Sister White. We often lamented the fact that most Adventist ministers in these last days rarely include the end-time admonitions of our prophet in their sermons.

Almost a year later, thanks to the providence of God, I was asked by Dr. Kenneth D. Brantley, a family friend, to assist him in caring for his wife Lydia who was terminally ill with lung cancer. The financial difficulties I had been experiencing at that time had already forced me to consider leaving MEET. After much consternation and prayer, I accepted the Brantley's offer without the faintest idea that God would use that experience to redirect the course of my life in more ways than I could have imagined.

During the time that I cared for Mrs. Brantley, she and I became very close. Within a few weeks after my employ, she told her husband that she believed that I was an answer to prayer and a gift from heaven. Realizing that her life would soon end, she shocked her husband one day with the suggestion that he consider me as his companion after her death. He told her such considerations were out of the question under the circumstances. She then asked him if he would at least think about it, and he promised her that he would.

After Mrs. Brantley's funeral, I agreed to continue assisting Dr. Brantley with his home and office work. It was not long before he became the love of my life, and within months we were united in holy matrimony. Our ceremony was conducted by my father, Elder Cleveland Tivy. Even though Ken's brand of Adventism was more liberal than mine, I was very happy and deeply in love with Ken. Just when I felt that things couldn't get any better, however, I noticed that my husband was spending an awfully lot of time reading in his office. Being naturally intuitive, I wondered what could possibly be monopolizing so much of his time.

I soon discovered a number of books in his office that appeared to be critical of Ellen White. My heart sank, and I couldn't believe that he, of all people, was indulging such heresy! I couldn't understand how a man of his intelligence and commitment to Adventism could stoop to that level! Didn't he know that Sister White was our prophet, endowed with a special message for His remnant church? I vividly recalled statements of Sister White that I had memorized as a child, of how in the last days, many advent believers would be those who would "make of none effect" her testimonies. My concern for my husband's preoccupation with anti-Adventist literature and its negative impact on our

Confessions

marriage mounted. I was determined to hold onto that which I “knew” to be true. It seemed that my loving husband needed help, and fast!

I was tempted to hide those hated books every time I observed him reading them. Burning them seemed an even better option. In desperation I sought divine intervention and was impressed to swallow my pride and try to understand my husband’s behavior. Ken had attempted to share the books with me, but I was not the least bit interested. I interpreted Ken’s efforts as a ploy of Satan to deceive me and was too afraid to look or listen. One day, however, I made the “mistake” of looking at some of the material he had copied from the internet. It prompted me to ask him if he had a copy of *White Out* by Dirk Anderson, a former defender of Ellen White. I was absolutely horrified by what I discovered!

The possibility that I could have been mistaken about the integrity of EGW and the doctrines of Adventism for all of my life was almost too traumatizing for me to deal with, yet I knew I had to get to the bottom of it all. I was compelled to probe more deeply into the life of Sister White and decided to borrow a few more of those books from my husband’s library. I read *White Washed* by Sydney Cleveland, and then *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet, Her False Claims Refuted* by D. M. Canright, a contemporary of Mrs. White.

Soon I found myself doing the very things that I had resented my husband doing! I was reading, examining, researching, and comparing what appeared to be contradictions between the doctrine of EGW and the truths of Scripture! After months of prayer, Bible study, and contemplation, I finally came to the conclusion that I had only one option, and that was to accept God’s Word, even if it meant giving up friends, family, and Adventism. The realization that much of what I had believed to be truth all of my life had in fact been a lie was a humbling experience.

Eventually Ken began questioning the validity of the Sabbath, and he suggested that I make a study of the Old Testament in order to better understand the Law and the Sabbath. He encouraged me to study with an open mind, accept God’s Word for what it said, and to try to purge my mind of all preconceptions. I promised him that I would. After asking the Lord to give me the courage and wisdom to embark upon this new study experience, I was reminded of Psalm 119:105 which says, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

I felt like a baby Christian, starting all over again, learning Biblical truths for the first time. God slowly and gently began to unfold to me the plain truths of His Word. To my utter astonishment, I discovered that many of my long-held beliefs about the Sabbath were not Biblically based. It was only then that I felt I could safely read books such as *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day* by H.M. Riggle and *Sabbath in Christ* by Dale Ratzlaff.

When I first discovered in 1 John 5:11-13 that God actually wants us to know that we have eternal life if we “believe on the name of the Son of God,” I wanted to shout! Even though I had read that passage many times, I had always filtered out this most important truth because Mrs. White had admonished us to never say we are saved. As I began understanding what the gospel was all about, I wanted to share with everyone I knew!

The first person with whom I shared my newfound faith was my twin sister. To my utter astonishment, she demonstrated no interest in what had made me so excited. Instead, she informed me that I was sliding down a slippery slope and that Satan had deceived me. My frustration knew no bounds.

When I shared the Good News with my free-spirit older sister, however, she informed me that she had been studying some of the same material that I had read and had already begun to have serious questions about the Adventist church. After more study, she arrived at the same conclusions that I had, praise God. Her response encouraged Ken and me in our study and in the knowledge that God is opening blind eyes and closed minds to His word.

It’s been almost two years since Ken and I left the

The possibility that I could have been mistaken about the integrity of EGW and the doctrines of Adventism for all of my life was almost too traumatizing for me to deal with, yet I knew I had to get to the bottom of it all.

Adventist church, and we are closer to God and to each other than ever before. It’s only because of His grace that we have been led out of darkness into His wonderful light. We now have wonderful, God-fearing friends who demonstrate true Christianity by opening their hearts, homes, and lives to us. We are currently attending an inspiring Baptist church and are understanding more and more of God’s magnificent love and sacrifice for us. We are embracing Him in a manner we never could have before.

Thanks be to God for the wonderful gift of His Word. It is so much more precious to me now than ever, and I cannot thank Him enough for the way in which He has freed me from the bondage of deception and ignorance. It is my desire to share the unadulterated truth of God’s Word with my family, friends, and anyone who is willing to stop, look, and listen.

To God be the glory!

!

NEW, IMPROVED!

INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

COLLEEN TINKER

Like a phoenix rising from embers, the ideas of the Investigative Judgment arose from the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, when Jesus failed to return as William Miller and others predicted. The doctrine followed the discarded Shut Door theory and provided an explanation of an event which supposedly transpired on that day, thus restoring equilibrium to a small group of visionaries, many of whom eventually founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This group included Ellen White whom many accepted as having a prophetic gift. Her visions confirmed the Investigative Judgment (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 158-159) and lent what her peers considered divine authority to the idea which eventually became the unique doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

While many Seventh-day Adventists today claim little knowledge of the Investigative Judgment and further assert they don't consider it very important, General Conference president Jan Paulsen holds a very different opinion. In his address "The Theological Landscape: Perspectives on Issues Facing the World Seventh-day Adventist Church" delivered to a group of 45 church leaders assembled in Greece in the spring of 2002 and later reprinted in the *Adventist Review*, Paulsen said:

The historic sanctuary message [of which the Investigative Judgment is the central event], based on Scripture and supported by the writings of Ellen White, continues to be held to unequivocally. And the inspired authori-

ties on which these and other doctrines are based, namely the Bible supported by the writings of Ellen White, continue to be the hermeneutical foundation on which we as a church place all matters of faith and conduct. *Let no one think that there has been a change of position in regard to this.* (italics mine)

Paulsen's statement underlies all attempts by others in the church to make this difficult, unique, identifying doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism palatable.

Subjective Atonement

Perhaps because of discomfort born of the lack of Biblical support for the Investigative Judgment—perhaps because of several liberal theologians' discomfort with the idea that God would stage a judgment for the purpose of meting out condemnation to people, the Investigative Judgment has received a new face in some circles during the past two or three decades.

Instead of focusing on the pioneers' original idea of God poring over the names of those who claim to be Christians to see who deserves salvation, this new interpretation says instead that God's review of the heavenly books of records is for the purpose of vindicating His character to the watching universe. In the words of Dennis Priebe (an Adventist pastor who spent 11 years on the faculty of Pacific Union College and is currently affiliated with Amazing Facts, an Adventist evangelistic ministry) in the Investigative

Judgment “God is opening Himself up for evaluation; in a very real sense He is the One being judged...Remember that the primary issue at stake...is not the destiny of individual persons but the character and methods of the Judge Himself. Satan’s great hope is to catch the Judge in an unfair act—an indefensible verdict, an act of favoritism. God must defend His decisions both to loyal beings and rebellious ones...God is inviting all who care to look over His shoulder as He reviews the records and His own decisions....Without this final judgment no true end to sin could be realized.” (“The Final Verdict,” <http://www.exprimare.com/dignoscencia/articles/read.asp?ArticleID=14>)

Graham Maxwell and Jack Provonsha, who both taught on the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University (LLU), are largely credited with introducing the “moral influence theory” into Adventist thought and practice by means of their teaching this view of the atonement to medical and dental students for over two decades. In brief, the moral influence theory claims a subjective view of the atonement. This view holds that the purpose of the cross was to demonstrate to humanity the mercy and love of God. Rather than satisfying the wrath of God or fulfilling a divine demand of sacrifice as atonement for sin, the cross revealed how far God would go in order to draw sinful man to Himself. Christ’s death was an object lesson of God’s love rather than an atonement for sin.

Maxwell has also borrowed from the “governmental theory” of atonement by further asserting that God, being the ruler of the universe, did not need Christ’s death in order to forgive humanity and atone for sin. He could have forgiven mankind just because He chose to, using His prerogative as God.

Both the moral influence theory and the governmental theory stand opposed to traditional Evangelical theology which holds an objective view of the atonement. This view holds that Jesus’ shed blood satisfied God’s justice which demanded the full payment for sin’s penalty. The book of Hebrews strongly supports this view of the atonement. Hebrews 9 and 10 discuss the necessity of Jesus’ blood as the means of paying for sin, thus reconciling rebellious humanity with the Father. Hebrews 9:22 states, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” According to an objective view of the atonement, death was the penalty God levied against man for sin. In order to save humanity from eternal death, Jesus had to redeem us “from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Thus, by his substitute death, Jesus paid our debt with God (Hebrews 9:14) and satisfied divine justice. God poured His wrath upon Jesus, thereby opening a way for us to be reunited with Him.

Graham Maxwell taught on the faculty of religion at LLU from 1961 to 1988. His writing and teaching helped develop the idea in Adventism that the purpose of the cross was

not the forgiveness of sins but rather the vindication of the trustworthiness of God’s character. Drawing from Ellen White’s ideas of the Great Controversy, or the supposed war between Christ and Satan, Maxwell helped set the stage for the fairly widespread adoption of the idea that the Investigative Judgment was really for the purpose of revealing and vindicating God’s motives and decisions rather than for the purpose of determining which believers qualified for Christ’s “final atonement.” In his 1987 essay “How God Won His Case,” Maxwell clearly presents his view of God being on trial.

“Unless God wins this war [the Great Controversy] and reestablishes peace in His family,” he states, “our salvation is meaningless.” He further says, “The conflict is over God’s own trustworthiness, and until serious questions concerning His character have been convincingly resolved, what sound basis is there for our faith in Him?” This conflict, Maxwell continues, is not an issue of power but “is over a far more subtle issue: Who is telling the truth, God or the brilliant leader of His Angels [Lucifer]?” God’s claims of His own trustworthiness, he says, mean nothing. He must demonstrate His “trustworthiness over a long period of time and under a great variety of circumstances.”

Maxwell develops his thesis by arguing that this issue of God’s trustworthiness is not only a human concern. He declares that the angels also must see that God is just, and he further claims that Jesus’ death on the cross was not just for humanity. “Christ did not die for sinful men alone,” he says; “He shed His blood for the sinless angels, too! For they, too, needed the faith-confirming message of the cross.” Maxwell makes this claim in spite of Hebrews 2:16–17 which states, “For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”

Maxwell quotes Ellen White to bolster his premise: “The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that

Instead of focusing on the pioneers’ original idea of Jesus poring over the names of those who claim to be Christians to see who deserves salvation, this new interpretation says instead that God’s review of the heavenly books of records is for the purpose of vindicating His character to the watching universe.

Christ came to the earth...but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68-69).

He concludes with this summary: "That the Sovereign of the universe, who has the power to run His creation any way He wishes, should humbly choose to win our agreement on the basis of adequate evidence is unbelievable—but true....How could a God like this fail to win His case—at least with me and you!"

Maxwell's view that the cross of Jesus was primarily for convincing God's creatures that God is loving and just, that it is not for paying the penalty for sin which God demanded, has permeated Adventism during the past 30 years. This interpretation of the atonement has laid the foundation for the corresponding reinterpretation of the Investigative Judgment (now often called the "pre-advent judgment") which states that God pores over the heavenly records in order to subject them to His creatures' critical scrutiny that they may see for themselves the validity of His decisions.

Attempts to merge objective atonement with Investigative Judgment

Edward Heppenstall was a professor of theology at La Sierra University and Loma Linda University, and he also taught at Andrews Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. In spite of his comparatively objective view of the atonement, Heppenstall was nonetheless loyal to the prophetic voice of Ellen White and the Adventist doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. In his 1972 book *Our High Priest*, he deals with this judgment in chapter 6. Heppenstall realized he had to acknowledge texts such as John 5:24 which states that a person who has placed trust in Jesus "does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (NASB). At the same time, he had to make sense of the church's defining doctrine.

In a rather convoluted defense, Heppenstall makes the case that when, as described in Daniel 7, Christ and his followers are given dominion, or the right to rule, they are shown to be worthy of this honor because their character has been vindicated.

Throughout the controversy Satan has called in question God's very character....The grounding of the judgment in God's character guarantees the vindication of God and of His saints....In the same way that forgiveness and redemption are exclusively God's work, so judgment is the vindication of God's character and of His right to rule. As a consequence, all of God's creatures throughout the universe will give honor, glory, and praise to God alone. Satan and his followers are dispossessed in order that the righteous love of God may prevail.

The result of Heppenstall's need to mesh the Investigative Judgment with Biblical statements of believers' security yielded an interpretation that veils the significance of Jesus' shed blood as atonement for sin and fails to

reckon with God's justice and wrath against sin. Instead of emphasizing God's investigation of believers' qualifications as the authentic doctrine states, Heppenstall argues that this investigation is an opportunity for God to defend His decisions to a watching universe.

God vindicates Himself

In 2000, the Seventh-day Adventist *Sabbath School Quarterly* dedicated the week of June 17-23 to the study of the Investigative Judgment. Without explaining that the historic (and still current) doctrine of the Investigative Judgment is about delayed atonement and an uncertain future for professed believers, the *Quarterly* emphasized the vindication of God as the main purpose of the judgment. In the study for June 21 the lesson says, "The evil forces have been passing judgment on God, accusing Him of being precisely the opposite of what He claims to be. God cleared up this distortion on the cross through the sacrificial death of His Son as our substitute. He has also allowed His creatures to be involved in the final judgment in order to witness the justice of His decisions. According to Daniel 7:10, during the Investigative Judgment 'A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened....[Satan] had sought to falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying law and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven....Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 498).

The *Quarterly* continues this theme in the Thursday lesson where it says, "The God who cannot be judged by the universe is willing to allow the universe to witness the wonderful way in which He dealt with the sin problem, thus demonstrating once and for all that the accusations of the evil powers were false. In the final judgment God vindicates Himself."

This idea that the Investigative Judgment is mainly for the purpose of God defending Himself against Satan's accusations is articulated clearly by John McLarty. McLarty pastors the North Hill Christian Fellowship, a Seventh-day Adventist church in Federal Way, Washington, and he is also the editor of *Adventist Today*. In an article entitled "Why I Like the Investigative Judgment" in the September/October, 1998 edition of *Adventist Today*, McLarty says,

Someone with the power of God could have all of us singing his praise even if he were the devil himself. He could hoodwink or coerce all of us into paying obeisance. The great value of the Investigative Judgment is its role in the process which will expose to human scrutiny every detail of God's interaction with his creation. God will ultimately have no secrets beyond the mystery of his tenacious love. Our final worship will be based on perfect knowledge, not on blind faith.

According to Adventist theology, God is not satisfied to be right. He will not rest on “Because I’m God” as the answer to questions raised by human reasoning. Instead, he has promised that eternity will not begin until every human question has been answered to our satisfaction....Most importantly, [the Investigative Judgment] is a crucial element in God’s plan to reveal himself and make himself accountable even to us for how he runs the universe.

What’s wrong here?

In spite of its kinder, gentler face, this “reinterpreted Investigative Judgment” is no more faithful to the Bible than is the official doctrine. In some ways, it is even more demoralizing. While it neglects to stress the incomplete atonement and the lack of security inherent in the original doctrine, thus superficially relieving Adventists of their continual sense of guilt and failure, it still fails to teach the all-sufficiency of Jesus’ atonement, thus depriving them of believers’ security. This reinterpreted version also deprives them of the reassurance that God is fully sovereign.

A truly sovereign God does not have to “earn” the right to rule, nor does He have to answer to His creations regarding His decisions. A God who is truly God of all does not have to prove to anyone that He is fair and Satan is lying. A truly sovereign God is not locked in a battle with Satan whose outcome is yet to be seen.

First, the outcome of Satan’s struggle against God has already been decided. Colossians 2:15 clearly says, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Jesus’ victory over Satan, who has exposed himself as the enemy of God and man, is also demonstrated in Matthew 12:22-29, Luke 10:17-19, and Romans 16:20.

Second, the Bible clarifies that we are not to suppose we can expect Him to explain Himself to us so we fully understand His reasoning. Neither does the Bible suggest that God does any sort of accounting to justify Himself to the universe.

The Bible clearly states God’s sovereign authority. At the end of the book of Job, after Job and all his friends had expressed their understanding of themselves and of God, God spoke. “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me” (Job 39:2). Then, following a series of rhetorical questions and challenges no human could answer, God said, “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!” (Job 40:2) Again God questions Job, and finally Job realizes that he, the “righteous” man he believed himself to be, had no answer for God, nor did he have any merit to recommend him to God for special treatment or knowledge. Job, the “righteous” man, ultimately realizes he must bow to God and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). Without ever having his questions answered or understanding what lay behind God’s permission of his suffering,

Job humbly submitted to God’s sovereign authority and worshiped Him because He was God.

Romans 9 also teaches the sovereignty of God. Paul quotes Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9 in verse 20 where he says, “But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? ‘Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “why did you make me like this?”’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” (Romans 9:21)

Ultimately, God has the last word in the universe. He never promises that He will answer all our questions on this side of eternity, nor does He seek to justify Himself to us. On the contrary, God “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

God’s Wisdom Revealed

To be sure, God reveals His wisdom to the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3:10). This revelation, though, is not a self-absolving “proof” that He is trustworthy or just, as so many of us have been taught. Neither is it attached to an “Investigative Judgment.”

What God reveals is His eternal intention for mankind and the effect of salvation on humanity: the mystery of God’s Spirit indwelling Christ-followers and bringing them to new life and to unity. This is not a unity of “tolerance” but of sharing the presence of the Eternal God through the miracle of new birth.

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul explains that God gave him the work of explaining to everyone “the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”

Paul identifies this mystery hidden in God for ages past as “Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2,3) who now lives in us who believe and who now is our “hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus—the mystery of God—changed history by opening a “new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20) to the Father with His shed blood (Hebrews 9:12) and by sending the Holy Spirit—God Himself—to indwell everyone who surrenders to Jesus as his Savior (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:27). Ancient Israel never imagined the reality of God becoming man, paying for sins with His blood, and making rebels into children born of God through the Holy Spirit (John 1:12-13; 3:1-8; Romans 8:15-17).

Ultimately, God has the last word in the universe. He never promises that He will answer all our questions on this side of eternity, nor does He seek to justify Himself to us.

This revelation of God's wisdom through us, the church, is possible only because when we are in Christ, our judgment was completed on the cross.

The mystery of Christ, however, extends beyond the person and work of Jesus. It is also through His work in the church that God reveals His multifaceted wisdom "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 3:10). God is glorifying

Himself through all those who, through faith in Jesus and His completed work on the cross, are brought to life and unity of purpose through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Nowhere does the Bible suggest God "proves" Himself just and trustworthy by opening the books of record and displaying His righteous judgments to the universe. God is never on trial. On the contrary, He is the righteous judge, (2 Timothy 4:8) and He will judge the world (Acts 17:31; Romans 3:5-6). It is not records of facts which bring glory to God. Rather, by placing His presence in the world by means of new creations born of God, He reveals His unimaginable wisdom.

This revelation of God's wisdom through us, the church, is possible only because when we are in Christ, our judgment was completed on the cross. As creatures born of the Spirit, we share in Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:5). We are no longer condemned, and we pass from death to life (John 3:18; 5:24). We are not subject to any ongoing Investigative Judgment; our future is secure.

Mythical Judgment

In summary, the idea of the Investigative Judgment is fatally flawed.

No matter how it is explained, the Investigative Judgment has not changed, and, as Paulsen confirmed, it will not change. Any variations one hears on this theme are simply attempts to make it more palatable. To borrow a quotation from Dale Ratzlaff, "Black is now white, but the color has not changed."

The original, authentic doctrine of the Investigative Judgment is flawed not only because it has no sound Biblical basis but also because it denies that Jesus completed His work of atonement at the cross. True Christ-followers are not awaiting judgment or "final atonement." They have "crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24), are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), and are eternally secure (John 10:27-30).

The "vindication of God" version of the Investigative Judgment is equally flawed. Like the authentic doctrine, it has no sound Biblical basis. While it does not overtly stress incomplete atonement or the uncertainty of passing God's inspection, it diminishes God's sovereignty and veils the

cross. It suggests the greatest universal issue is the trustworthiness of God, not the destruction of sin and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. It denies the power and authority of Jesus' blood to repair the universe and presents God as having to win by persuasion the right to rule. It further obscures God's holiness and justice by denying His wrath against evil and His authority to destroy sinners who have refused to submit to Him and to accept the righteousness of Christ.

The Investigative Judgment is not only a clumsy effort to save face when a faulty prophecy failed; it has also become a doctrine that denies the sovereign rule of the Lord Jesus and the glory that is His because He is the Lamb slain from the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Instead of exalting the Creator's glory above all, this doctrine elevates the creatures' importance, suggesting we can demand answers from a God who had no beginning and who spoke the universe into existence.

This doctrine obscures the glory and majesty of Jesus from an entire denomination. As long as one lives in the shadow of the Investigative Judgment, however one interprets it, that person cannot experience the unspeakable joy of security in Christ. He cannot experience Him as the exalted Lord who is worthy of our praise and worship because He bore our sins, died our death, and finished His atonement at the cross. He cannot experience the wonder of Jesus being all he needs and filling his heart with God's glory.

A person living in the shadow of the Investigative Judgment cannot experience these things because it hides the real Jesus and His finished work.

In spite of its difficulties, however, the doctrine persists. No matter how pastors, theologians, or teachers reinterpret it, the Investigative Judgment remains the church's only unique doctrine, and it underlies all of Adventist theology. Even those who attempt to force it to conform more closely to Evangelical theology know they cannot let it go. The Investigative Judgment must remain if Adventism is to remain. *General Conference president Jan Paulsen's words leave no room for doubt: "The historic sanctuary message, based on Scripture and supported by the writings of Ellen White, continues to be held to unequivocally... Let no one think that there has been a change of position in regard to this."*

Yet the Biblical truth remains: in Jesus our judgment is past. In Jesus our eternity is certain. In Jesus our hearts rest.

Because Jesus was obedient unto death, every knee will bow before Him; every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Revelation 5:12, 13)

Amen.

Progressive revelation: what is it?

DALE RATZLAFF

In the writings of Ellen White there are numerous statements that are clearly erroneous. Many of these were later changed or reinterpreted. Also, we often find that her early statements stand in direct contradiction to her later statements. Many Adventists explain this phenomenon by calling it "progressive revelation."

What progressive revelation is

Progressive revelation has two nuances of meaning. First, a specific truth may be relevant when it is first revealed but later may have no more application. For example, in Noah's day, truth was, "A flood is coming; get into the ark." While the record of the story remains true today, it is not applicable truth today. Two things must be said about this first nuance of meaning: 1) the truth involved was applicable to specific circumstances, and 2) under those specific circumstances, the truth was indeed truth and not error.

The second nuance of meaning in progressive revelation is that not all truth is given at one time but is revealed in incremental steps. The important thing to recognize is that the additional increments do not contradict the former truth. For instance, many Old Testament prophecies point forward to the coming of Christ. By themselves, these prophecies are only hints of reality. When the full reality comes, however, these prophecies are still truth and become a part of a larger truth. It is important to recognize that this part of truth is still truth and not error. In other words, progressive truth is an unfolding of truth, not a progression from error to truth.

What progressive revelation is not

Too often error has gone undetected because it is wearing a garment labeled "progressive truth." Are the following illustrations truth or error?

If I told you clearly that I was going to purchase a new, green Dodge in two days and then came home with a used gray Ford in ten days, would I have told the truth? I hope you will say, "No, you did not!"

Now let's suppose I argue that I really did tell you the truth because the Ford is a greenish-gray (a form of green, right?), and when I said I'd buy a "new" car, I meant "new to me," not "brand new." Further, the Ford is only slightly used (it's almost new!), and it looks much like the Dodge (so what's the difference, really?). Additionally, I really did buy the car in two days as I said I would—I just didn't actually fill out all the paperwork and write a check for it until ten days later. But I'd picked it out!

What would your response be to me? I hope you would

say, "No, you still did not tell me the truth, and you're trying to deceive or manipulate me into thinking you are telling the truth."

Now picture a continuum from black to white with varying shades of gray between the two. Black is almost the same as the darkest gray, which is almost the same as the next lighter shade of gray. At the other end of the continuum, we see that the lightest shades of gray are almost white. When moving from one end of the continuum to the other in small incremental steps, there is very little perception of change. Does this gradual change, however, make black white, or white black?

It is important to recognize that this part of truth is still truth and not error. In other words, progressive truth is an unfolding of truth, not a progression from error to truth.

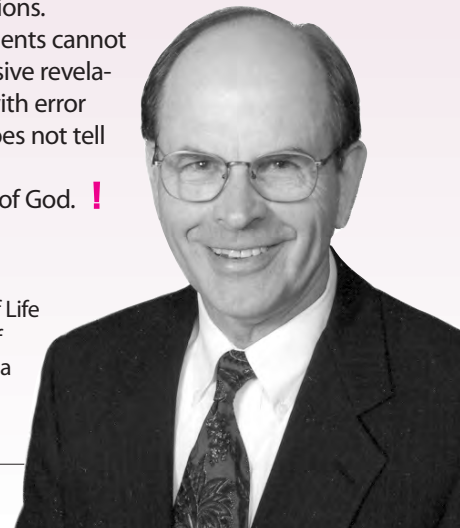
If you say, "No," we will understand each other. If, however, you say, "Because the black on the continuum changes into white without sharp lines of demarcation between the two, then black must be the same as white, because this is progressive revelation," we are again in trouble. This would not be progressive "truth" but deceptive error.

Even if error and truth are connected by a number of intermediate gradations, the gradual change does not make error into truth. Evaluating truth and error requires clear and precise thinking, especially so when the two are connected by a number of intermediate or contrary positions.

Ellen White's contradictory statements cannot be excused by calling them "progressive revelation." God's revelation never begins with error and ends in truth or vice versa. He does not tell untruth to teach truth.

We ground our lives in the reality of God. **!**

Dale Ratzlaff is founder and president of Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., the publisher of *Proclamation!* Life Assurance Ministries is a non-profit corporation that depends on tax-deductible donations.



Is it wrong to be right?

DIRK ANDERSON

The dining room table was littered with books, calendars, and notes scribbled on paper. My uncle had an air of confidence about him. He had checked and rechecked his calculations of the Jubilee and could hardly contain his excitement. He knew the day that Jesus would return to the earth! It was all going to be over in a matter of months. In the subsequent weeks, he began fasting and seeking God as never before. He began sharing his discoveries with his friends, family, and his brethren at the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida. He told all who would listen about Jesus' return on the "Day of Jubilee" in 1994.

Few believed him. Some shook their heads and walked off. Others tried to reason with him, saying we cannot know the "day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh,"¹ and reminding him not all of Revelation's signs had been fulfilled. All was to no avail. Not only was he convinced he was right, he was grieved that others would not accept his findings. How could they not see what he saw?

A Look Back

Step back in time with me to 1844. Let's look at one of the most profound and disturbing teachings to emerge from the pioneers who eventually founded the Adventist church.

It is the fall of 1844. William Miller's first prediction about the return of Christ in 1843 had failed, but the leading Millerite brethren had worked out a new date. They could hardly contain their excitement! They began visiting churches, and the advent movement started to regain some of the momentum it had lost after the 1843 debacle.

By this point, however, many of the churches were no longer willing to accept Miller or his associates. A number of able Protestant scholars had written tracts and books showing the errors of William Miller's 15 proofs,² and the majority of churches were convinced that while Miller may

have had good intentions, his scholarship missed the mark widely. The major Protestant churches in America presented four reasons why Mr. Miller was wrong.

The Four Reasons Miller was Wrong

1) Date-setting is dangerous. Protestant pastors and scholars knew that time-setting leads to false revivals, and the bitter disappointment which follows often results in destroying the faith of those involved. Later in life, even Ellen White acknowledged the danger of setting dates and times:

"Those who so presumptuously preach definite time, in so doing gratify the adversary of souls; for they are advancing infidelity rather than Christianity. They produce Scripture and by false interpretation show a chain of argument which apparently proves their position. But their failures show that they are false prophets, that they do not rightly interpret the language of inspiration."³

2) Date-setting was in direct contradiction to the words of Jesus who said:

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."⁴

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."⁵

3) Not all the pre-advent prophecies of the Bible had been fulfilled in 1844. For example, Christ predicted the gospel would be preached in the entire world before He returned:

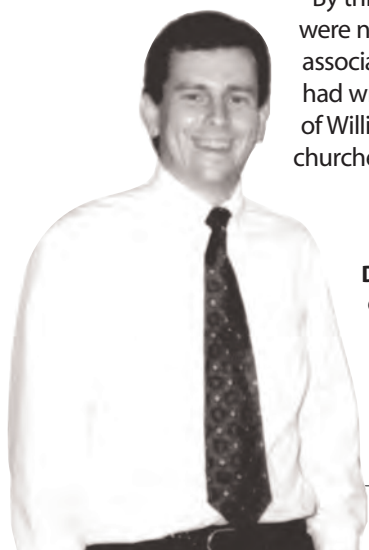
"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."⁶

There were literally thousands of languages and dialects that had never heard the gospel in 1844. For example, the great missionary David Livingstone had not yet opened up the heart of Africa to the good news. Clearly Christ could not come in 1844 in opposition to His own word!

4) William Miller's "15 proofs" of Christ's return in 1844 were the result of poor Biblical exegesis. Some of the texts he used to develop his theory were not prophetic passages, and others were badly misused. For example, in his 15th proof, Miller added the 1335 days of Daniel 12 with the number 666 from Revelation 13 and somehow managed to end up with 1844.⁷

The Protestant churches in New England had the same reaction to Miller in 1844 that the little Adventist church in Florida had to my uncle 150 years later. But some in 1844, like

Dirk Anderson spent 33 years in the Seventh-day Adventist Church before uncovering the truth about Ellen White. Determined that others should not be deceived the way he was, in 1998 Dirk founded a web site dedicated to telling the truth about the SDA prophetess: www.ellenwhite.org.



“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

the 17-year-old Ellen Harmon (later White), were caught up in the thrill of the moment. In their excitement they lost sight of the Biblical reasons for rejecting Miller's date.

Conflict Erupts

When churches shut their doors to Miller and scoffed at his predictions, the situation deteriorated. The Millerites responded by deriding the churches as “Babylon” and the “Synagogue of Satan.”⁸ Ellen White later acknowledged the opposition to Miller, but interpreted that opposition as hypocrisy:

“The preaching of definite time called forth great opposition from all classes, from the minister in the pulpit down to the most reckless, heaven-daring sinner. ‘No man knoweth the day nor the hour,’ was heard from the hypocritical minister and the bold scoffer.”⁹

Those pastors who objected to the setting of time were derided as unchristian:

“Many shepherds of the flock, who professed to love Jesus, said that they had no opposition to the preaching of Christ's coming, but they objected to the definite time. God's all-seeing eye read their hearts. They did not love Jesus near. They knew that their unchristian lives would not stand the test, for they were not walking in the humble path marked out by Him.”¹⁰

Mrs. White even says that angels were sent to lead people out of the churches that rejected Miller's time-setting:

“I saw Jesus turn His face from those who rejected and despised His coming, and then He bade angels lead His people out from among the unclean, lest they should be defiled.”¹¹

To those like Ellen (Harmon) White who embraced the delusion of Christ's return in 1844, anyone fighting against Miller's message must be fighting against God. Ellen White apparently could not fathom the fact that there were very valid reasons for not believing in Miller's date. In her mind, the righteous accepted Miller's delusion while the ungodly rejected it:

“The most devoted gladly received the message. They knew that it was from God.”¹²

One can only wonder how Ellen White could say, “they knew it was from God,” but later could write that those preaching a definite time were “advancing infidelity rather than Christianity.”

Probation's Door Slams Shut

After the disappointment of 1844, William Miller confessed his mistake, but Joseph Bates and the Whites believed and

taught that a door of probation closed on Oct. 22, 1844. At first, the Whites taught the door was shut to all who had not joined the Millerite movement, but later they modified their view so that only those people that specifically *rejected* the message of Christ's imminent return in 1844 (referred to as the 1st angel's message) and/or *rejected* the call to leave the churches of “Babylon” (referred to as the 2nd angel's message) had a door of probation shut upon them.

Ellen White, writing in 1883, explains how the door of salvation was shut in 1844:

“I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.

“Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that the Spirit of God could not reach. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith. These might have a form of godliness, and profess to be followers of Christ; but having no living connection with God, they would be taken captive by the delusions of Satan. These two classes are brought to view in the vision—those who declared the light which they had followed a delusion, and the wicked of the world who, having rejected the light, had been rejected of God. No reference is made to those who had not seen the light, and therefore were not guilty of its rejection.”¹³

According to Ellen White, the door of mercy shut on these Christians solely because they did not believe William Miller and leave their churches to follow him. Their crime was that they were correct. They failed to be deluded. Now follow this line of reasoning. If Miller was wrong, and the Christians churches were right, why did God close a door of probation upon them?

It's Right to be Wrong and Wrong to be Right

Mrs. White claimed God's Spirit left them and went with those who accepted the delusion of a false teaching. In effect, Mrs. White was saying it was right to be wrong, and wrong to be right.

As noted above, Ellen White said when the Millerites “pronounced their experience a delusion,” they “thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.” One

would think this exclusion must include William Miller who openly and humbly admitted his mistake:

"We expected the personal coming of Christ at that time; and now to contend that we were not mistaken, is dishonest. We should never be ashamed frankly to confess our errors. I have no confidence in any of the new theories that grew out of that movement, namely, that Christ then came as the Bridegroom, that the door of mercy was closed, that there is no salvation for sinners, that the seventh trumpet then sounded, or that it was a fulfillment of prophecy in any sense."¹⁴

However, Mrs. White could not so easily consign to perdition her former leader, a man she equated with no less than John the Baptist:

"As John the Baptist heralded the first advent of Jesus and prepared the way for His coming, so William Miller and those who joined with him proclaimed the second advent of the Son of God."¹⁵

How could the door of salvation be shut upon one whose mind, according to Mrs. White, was so divinely inspired?

"God directed the mind of William Miller to the prophecies and gave him great light upon the book of Revelation."¹⁶

"Angels of God repeatedly visited that chosen one [Miller], to guide his mind and open to his understanding prophecies which had ever been dark to God's people"¹⁷

Mrs. White solved the dilemma by claiming Miller was not really responsible for

"...suffering his influence to go against the truth. Others led him to this; others must account for it. But angels watch the precious dust of this servant of God, and he will come forth at the sound of the last trump."¹⁸

Cognitive Dissonance

When I ask Adventists what they would have done had they been alive in 1844 and known the four principles discussed above, they invariably admit they would have rejected Miller also. I point out that by so doing, they would have been, according to Ellen White, shutting off any possibility of their own salvation. It is much easier to excuse Mrs. White's message of doom when it condemns people who lived in 1844 than it would be to overlook it if it condemned oneself. If a person puts himself in the shoes of one of the honest Christians Mrs. White's message condemned, he must start asking, was there a valid basis for a door of salvation to be shut in 1844?¹⁹

Ellen White "saw that God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843."²⁰

Is this how God operates? Does God lead a man to set a definite time for Christ's return even though Christ forbade that practice in Matthew 25:13? Does God close the door of probation on Christians who refused to be deluded by the falsehood proclaimed by Miller?

No! It is a slander upon the character of God to charge Him with being responsible for the 1843-44 delusion.

A true prophet of God does not receive untrue revelations from Him. God does not trick people into accepting a falsehood in order to manipulate them into obedience.

Even though Mrs. White later amended her message and "opened" the shut door of salvation, her original words opposed the clear teaching of Jesus and credited God with deception. God does not inspire His messengers with untruth at any time. He cannot lie, and His prophets' messages likewise cannot be lies.

Perhaps the question all Adventists should face is this: "If you had known the four principles listed above, would you have accepted William Miller's teaching?" If the answer is "No," then they must ask themselves how they can excuse Ellen White's endorsement of it and her condemnation of all who rejected it. A true prophet of God will not receive visions denying the Bible or representing the Almighty as a trickster.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"²¹

Endnotes

1. Matthew 25:13.
2. E.g., John Dowling, *An Exposition of the Prophecies, Supposed by William Miller to Predict the Second Coming of Christ, in 1843*, (CROCKER & BREWSTER: BOSTON), 1840, and, A. Cosmopolite, *Miller Overthrown: Or the False Prophet Confounded*, (ABEL TOMPKINS: BOSTON), 1840.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* Vol. 4, p. 307.
4. Matthew 25:13.
5. Mark 13:31—Only the Father knows the time of Christ's return. Jesus further told His disciples, "...It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts 1:7.
6. Matthew 24:14.
7. William Miller, 15th proof, as quoted in *History of the Second Advent Believers*, p. 689: "It can be proved by the numbers in Rev. xiii. 18: 'Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six,' connected with Daniel xii. 12, as before quoted. This text shows the number of years that Rome would exist under the blasphemous head of Paganism, after it was connected with the people of God by league; beginning B.C. 158, add 666 years, will bring us to A.D. 508, when the daily sacrifice was done away. Then add, Daniel xii. 12, the 1335 to 508, makes the year 1843." Note: After the 1843 failure, this proof was recalculated to point to 1844.
8. See for example, Charles Fitch's comment, as quoted in Jonathon Butler, *The Disappointed*, p. 197, "If you are a Christian, come out of Babylon. If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, come out of Babylon, and come out now..."
9. Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 233.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 249.
12. Ibid., p. 235.
13. Ellen G. White, Ms 4, 1883 in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 63, 64.
14. William Miller as cited in *History of the Advent Message*, pp. 410, 412.
15. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 229.
16. Ibid., p. 231. Apparently this "great light" on Revelation Miller supposedly received from God included his 15th proof, which said the number 666 of Rev. 13:8 ended in 1843.
17. Ibid., p. 232.
18. Ibid., p. 258.
19. The only other Biblical account of a door of salvation being shut is one week prior to the Flood. What was the basis of God shutting the door of salvation before Noah's flood? "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5.
20. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 232.
21. Isaiah 5:20.

Your questions finally answered

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

1) The Provisional Phase. When a sinner repents, Christ makes a provisional atonement for him by applying His blood in the heavenly sanctuary. This atonement accomplishes two things for the penitent sinner: a) He is granted a provisional pardon. b) The guilt (penalty) of his sins is not cancelled but transferred from himself onto Christ who now bears it in the heavenly sanctuary.

Ellen White (EGW) explains the provisional nature of Christ's first phase (apartment) ministration as follows: "For eighteen centuries [from Christ's ascension to 1844] this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the [heavenly] sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record" (GC 421).

The Type

To understand this statement we need to note what EGW says about the typical service [the Old Testament sanctuary service which was a shadow, or type, of the true work of God] on which this statement is based: "Important truths concerning the atonement are taught by the typical service. A substitute was accepted in the sinner's stead; but the sin [its guilt or penalty] was not cancelled by the blood of the victim. A means was thus provided by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of the blood the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed his guilt in transgression, and expressed his desire for pardon through faith in a Redeemer to come; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law" (GC 420).

Because the daily atonement of the sanctuary services did not cancel the Israelites' guilt but only transferred it to the holy place of the sanctuary, the Adventist pioneers concluded, "the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin" (*Patriarchs and Prophets* [PP] 355). The sacrifices only atoned for sin provisionally. As a result the sinner was forgiven only provisionally; he was not released from the condemnation of the law until he was cleared of his debt at the end of the year on the Day of Atonement. Until then he was placed on probation. Furthermore, EGW refers to the sins that were transferred into the sanctuary by means of the blood of the sacrifice as "the sins by which [the sanctuary] had been polluted" (GC 420). This pollution, she therefore explained, created the need for the sanctuary's cleansing.

Let us note the construction in EGW's explanation above: the repentant Israelite who brought his offering to the officiating priest in the tabernacle experienced the following: 1) A substitute was accepted in his place. 2) Although he was forgiven his sin, it was not cancelled but transferred into the sanctuary. 3) As a result, he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law (GC 420). 4) She goes on to explain that on the Day of Atonement all sin was transferred from the sanc-

tuary to the scapegoat who then paid for it (GC 422). Thus the sanctuary was cleansed from the nation's sins.

The Anti-type

Now, based on the typological hermeneutic of the Adventist pioneers—"as in type, so in antitype" (GC 420), the same argument applies to the ministration of Jesus during His first phase (apartment) ministration. It can be summarized as follows: 1) Jesus is the divine Substitute for guilty man. 2) Those that put their faith in Him are only forgiven provisionally. 3) They do not have the record of their sins blotted out at this point. 4) The guilt and penalty of their sins are not cancelled but transferred onto Jesus their Substitute in the heavenly sanctuary. "As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary" (GC 421). "[Christ] stands in the presence of God, saying, 'Father, I take upon Myself the guilt [or penalty] of that soul. It means death to him

...as long as Christ bears the guilt or penalty of confessed and forgiven sins, the heavenly sanctuary is defiled and in need of cleansing. 5) As a result believers are not entirely released from the condemnation of the law until their penalty is fully paid. 6) They are therefore placed on probation...

if he is left to bear it'" (*Review and Herald*, Feb. 27, 1900. Quoted in *Questions on Doctrine*, 684). Therefore, as long as Christ bears the guilt or penalty of confessed and forgiven sins, the heavenly sanctuary is defiled and in need of cleansing. 5) As a result believers are not entirely released from the condemnation of the law until their penalty is fully paid. 6) They are therefore placed on probation until Christ makes the final atonement for them during his second phase (apartment) ministration during which He cleanses the sanctuary from their sins.

Three aspects mentioned above need to be stressed for clarity. 1) The blood of Christ does not cancel the believer's guilt on confession but instead transfers it onto Christ. 2) Because the believer's guilt is not cancelled and his record is not blotted out on confession, he is not released from the condemnation of the law at this point. 3) Because the believer is

still under the condemnation of the law, he is placed on probation until his name comes up for consideration in the Investigative Judgment. If he passes, he will benefit by Christ's final phase ministration.

Adventism's atonement theology

A basic fact about Adventism's atonement theology needs clarifying at this point. The sanctuary doctrine states that Christ makes the atonement in heaven, *not* on the cross. The pioneers made a clear distinction between Christ's sacrificial death on

Adventism states that Christ did not make the atonement by His sacrificial death upon the cross; rather, He makes it in the heavenly sanctuary like the priests did under the Old Covenant Levitical system.

the cross and his making the atonement in heaven by applying His blood on the mercy seat there. This distinction was based on the Old Covenant sanctuary service in ancient Israel. The pioneers differentiated between the slaying of the sin offering (the sacrifice) outside the sanctuary and the subsequent atonement that was made inside the sanctuary where the priest applied the blood.

These two things—sacrifice and atonement—were not synonymous to them as they are in Evangelical theology. This understanding is clearly documented in the early writings of the pioneers including Ellen White (until she began plagiarizing from Evangelical scholars). For example, referring to the Day of Atonement service in ancient Israel, she states: "...the sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice. ..." (GC 422). Referring to Christ's death on the cross, she states: "Christ's sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled" (*Acts of the Apostles* [AA] 29). So, according to EGW, although the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was full and complete, it was not the atonement as such; it was merely the *condition* of the atonement—an atonement which would be made in heaven afterwards.

So, contrary to Evangelical Christianity which states that Christ made the atonement for sin by means of His sacrificial death upon the cross, Adventism states that Christ did not make the atonement by His sacrificial death upon the cross; rather, He makes it in the heavenly sanctuary like the priests did under the Old Covenant Levitical system.

2) The Final Phase. For those who pass the scrutiny of the Investigative Judgment, Christ will make the final atonement. This atonement will accomplish two things for these fortunate believers: a) The record of their sins will be blotted out. b) Their guilt, which Christ has borne up to now as their

Substitute, will be transferred onto Satan (the real scapegoat according to Adventism) who will finally pay for it. By this modus operandum the sanctuary in heaven is cleansed from their sins. Only then will the believer be released from the condemnation of the law and receive pardon and justification "full and complete" (GC 484).

With Adventism's typological hermeneutic in mind—'as in type, so in antitype' (GC 420) - EGW explains the heavenly reality by the earthly type: "As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin [its record and guilt] from the sanctuary [in heaven]. This is the service that began when the 2300 days [of Daniel 8:14] ended [on October 22, 1844]. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy [apartment in the heavenly sanctuary], to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary... It was seen, also, that while the sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice, and the high priest represented Christ as Mediator, the scapegoat typified Satan, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed. When the high priest, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, removed the [guilt of] sins from the sanctuary, he placed them upon the scapegoat. *When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the [guilt of] sins from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty*" (GC 421-422). Thus is the heavenly sanctuary cleansed. In Adventism's theology the "cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary" is effected by means of Christ's "work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary" (GC 658). Therefore, there can be no cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from the record and guilt of God's people's sins without Christ first making the second phase (apartment) atonement for them with His blood.

The Investigative Judgment

In the Investigative Judgment during Christ's final phase ministration, God decides who of believers are entitled to the benefits of Christ's 'final' atonement and who are not. Those who have complied with the prerequisites will qualify and have the sanctuary cleansed from their sins. They will be saved when Jesus comes again. Those who have not complied with the prerequisites will be disqualified. Their sins will remain on record and will witness against them. As a result they will be 'cut off' and lost when Jesus comes again. EGW explains it as follows: "In the typical service, when the high priest entered the most holy place, all Israel were required to gather about the sanctuary and in the most solemn manner humble their souls before God, that they might receive the pardon of their sins and not be cut off from the congregation. How much more essential in this antitypical Day of Atonement that we understand the work of our High Priest and know what duties are required of us" (GC 430. See also GC 489-490; 1 SM 124, 125).

EGW explains this further by stating that “it is impossible that the sins of [believers] should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated” (GC 485). She sums it up by saying: “The work of examination of character, of determining who [of believers] are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing work in the sanctuary above” (GC 428).

Therefore, the nature of this judgment is clearly that of an investigation into the lives and characters of believers to determine who of them are entitled to Christ’s second apartment ministration – the ‘final’ atonement resulting in the blotting out of their sins and the transfer of their guilt onto Satan. This atonement would cleanse the sanctuary from their sins and constitute them ready for Christ’s second coming. Only those of God’s people who ‘pass’ the scrutiny of the Investigative Judgment will finally be saved when Christ comes again because only they have received “the benefits of [Christ’s final] atonement” (EW 260) and “benefited by His mediation” (EW 253).

Its Subjects

It is important to clearly understand who the subjects are in this Investigative Judgment. It is clearly stated in Adventism that only believers are considered. Says EGW: “So, in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God.” (GC 480). “All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny” (GC 486).

In this regard the Investigative Judgment has two aspects. First, God will judge believers who have died; then He will take up the cases of believers who are alive. In 1888 Mrs. White penned these words: “The [investigative] judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years [i.e. since October 22, 1844] this work has been in progress [with believers who have died]. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review” (GC 490).

As far as could be ascertained at the time I left Adventism in 1980, Jesus was still busy investigating believers who have died. Everybody was fairly certain He had not yet begun with believers who are alive. This simply meant that no living believer could claim to be saved because, as stated already, salvation is contingent upon passing the Investigative Judgment, receiving Christ’s ‘final’ atonement, having one’s record of sins blotted out, and having one’s guilt transferred onto Satan. And as no living believer’s case had been investigated yet at the time, no one’s eternal destiny had been decided yet. This is why Mrs. White issued the warning: “Those who accept the Savior should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved” (*Christ’s Object Lessons* [COL] 155) until after they have passed the scrutiny of the Investigative Judgment.

Its Standard

The standard of the Investigative Judgment is clearly stated

as being the Law of God. Says EGW: “The law of God is the standard by which the characters and lives of [believers] will be tested in the [investigative] judgment” (GC 482). By the “law of God” EGW means the Old Covenant Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) as given to Israel on mount Sinai. (See GC chapters 25 and 27).

But what is the standard of the law of God? It demands nothing less than perfect conformity. EGW equates this perfection to Christ’s perfection while He was here on earth under the law! (See GC 623; *Our High Calling* [OHC] 150.)

What this means is that in the Investigative Judgment, God checks the believer’s character against that of Christ’s to see if he is reflecting “the image of Jesus fully” (*Early Writings* [EW] 71) by overcoming all the sins he had committed as recorded in the heavenly books which are kept in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. In the Investigative Judgment, the believer will face his sins again. If he has overcome them, they will be blotted out. If not, they will remain on record witnessing against him until he has paid for them himself! Thus will he be eternally lost (GC 486-488).

Its Severity

EGW also dramatically presents the severity of the Investigative Judgment. When God the Father examines believers to determine whether they have complied with the prerequisites for Christ’s second apartment ministration, we are told that He “will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not

**This is why Mrs. White issued the warning:
“Those who accept the Savior should never be
taught to say or to feel that they are saved”
until after they have passed the scrutiny of
the Investigative Judgment.**

another being upon the earth” (GC 490)! “In the [investigative judgment] the use made of every talent will be scrutinized. How have we [believers] employed the capital lent us of heaven? ... Have we improved the powers entrusted to us, in hand and heart and brain, to the glory of God and the blessing of the world? How have we used our time, our pen, our voice, our money, our influence? What have we done for Christ in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the orphan or the widow?” (GC 487).

Because of the severity and solemnity of the Investigative Judgment that awaits every believer, EGW has given many serious warnings against frivolous attitudes. For example: “Those who would share the benefits of the Savior’s (second apartment) mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their

duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God.... Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important then that every [believer] contemplate often the solemn scene [as given to Mrs. White in vision] when the [investigative] judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when... every [believer] must stand in his [own] lot [before God] at the end of the day [of his probation]" (GC 488)!

Attention must be drawn to three important points here: a) At the end of the Investigative Judgment, Christ can blot out the believer's sin record because Satan the scapegoat will finally pay the penalty. In other words, until the payment of the penalty of sin is ensured, the record of sin cannot be blotted out. b) Christ did not pay the penalty for the sins of humanity on the cross. He was only the sacrifice providing the blood for the atonement that he would subsequently be making in the heavenly sanctuary. c) This atonement which Christ makes in heaven is not for the payment of sin's penalty. It is only for the *transfer* of sin—in the provisional (first) phase, from the penitent sinner to Christ; in the final (second) phase, from Christ to Satan who will pay the penalty. Those who did not qualify for Christ's final phase ministry will have to pay the penalty for their own sins which will be transferred from Christ back onto them.

To Summarize

1. Christ's First Phase Ministration: a) Christ makes a provisional atonement for believers which yields b) a provisional pardon from God. c) Their guilt (penalty) is not cancelled but transferred from themselves to Christ in heaven. d) The record of their sins is not blotted out. e) Believers therefore remain under condemnation. f) Believers are placed on probation, [i.e. a suspended sentence.] g) The heavenly Sanctuary is defiled by the record of believer's sins and by their guilt which Christ carries into the sanctuary.

2. Christ's Second Phase Ministration: a) God conducts an Investigative Judgment of professed believers' lives. b) Believers who pass receive Christ's 'final' atonement made with His blood, therefore c) blotting out the record of their sins. d) Their penalty is transferred from Christ to Satan—the real scapegoat (according to Adventism)—who will pay in the end. e) Believers are only now cleared of condemnation in the court of heaven. f) "Christ now asks... for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne" (GC 484. Read full passage on pp. 483-485.) g) This ministration cleanses the sanctuary, clears believers, and transfers their guilt from Christ to Satan.

The Implications

Believers who have not yet passed the Investigative Judgment have only the benefits of Christ's first (provisional) phase ministration. They are therefore on probation with a provisional pardon from God. During this time they are to prepare for the day when their names will be called for their trial. No one knows when this will be or what the outcome will be. This

belief has traditionally bred unbearable insecurity amongst Adventists, resulting in utter despair. It is not surprising that Adventist scholars have sought to reinterpret it so as to bring relief to the oppressed. *If EGW is upheld as a doctrinal authority as Adventism claims she is, however, then Adventists must face up to her teaching about this doctrine. No one has the right to change it because they don't agree with it anymore. This doctrine is part and parcel of being an Adventist.*

Scriptural Reality

Scripture, however, teaches we can be certain of our standing with God. Jesus said, "... whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). "Whoever believes in him [God's Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18).

Paul also assures us: "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass [by Adam] was condemnation for all men so also the result of one act of righteousness [by Christ on the cross] was justification that brings life for all men" (Romans 5:18). Clearly, God's verdict of justification cancels His verdict of condemnation "for those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17). So Paul could say, "all have sinned and are justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23, 24).

In view of these assurances, Romans 8:1 stands like a clear beacon above the murky waters of Adventism's 1844 Sanctuary doctrine and its Gospel-denying Investigative Judgment doctrine: "There is therefore NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ."

Later Paul asks, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? [See Eph. 1:3]. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

In the clear light of God's Word, Adventism's 1844 Sanctuary theology and the Investigative Judgment crumble; they are not founded upon clear Scriptural exegesis but upon an eisegesis of the worst kind. In direct contrast to this doctrine, the Bible is clear that Jesus completed His atonement on the cross; believers have already been judged in Christ, and they can know for certain that they are saved *now*.

Praise the Lord!

Ministry has blessed us

After reading through the last *Proclamation!* I wanted to write to you and thank you for the invaluable support that you have provided for my husband and me. I had contacted you a little over a year ago to request your books *Cultic Doctrine* and *Sabbath in Christ* after I had started studying my Adventist roots. The past year has been one of euphoric lessons about God and His grace to us, as well as the all-too-usual pain that comes with extracting oneself from a false religious system—especially when our families are very loyal to the church. But we are fully processed out, having written our resignation letter this spring, though it has not been acknowledged on their end yet.

We praise God for what He has done in our lives—for bringing us out of Adventism, and for people like you who have gone before and offer support for the way. I know that Adventists (like cornered animals) can be cruel and spiteful and that you find those aimed your direction all too often. I want you to know that we remember you and your ministry to God in our prayers. We pray He will keep you strong and shielded. We are re-reading *Cultic Doctrine* and impatiently await each and every edition of *Proclamation!* Your ministry has blessed us tremendously.

Righteousness of Christ

I read with interest the letter responding to Desmond Ford's article. The writer stated that Mrs. White's main message was "righteousness by faith" and that Adventist pastors are preaching "the righteousness of Christ."

I have Adventist friends who have also stated

the above to me many times. These same Adventist friends, though, also believe that in the last days, only Sabbath keepers would be saved. Christians who believe in Jesus and continue to worship on Sunday will be judged as having the mark of the beast. In this belief system, where is righteousness in Christ, by faith alone? All of a sudden it becomes keep the Sabbath plus believe in Jesus to be saved.

My husband and I have walked out of the confusion of Adventism and into the arms of our savior Jesus. Hallelujah. We both ache for family and friends who maintain their Adventist beliefs, even when it is shown that the word of God is in opposition to their beliefs.

Thank you, Life Assurance Ministries, for your great work; without you we would be so alone. Please pray that the Spirit of truth will permeate the Adventist churches in Australia. God bless.

Di Fennell

Studied myself out

I was a third generation Adventist and studied myself out of the church over 25 years ago. Dale Ratzlaff's books and Life Assurance Ministries have been a real inspiration to me; *Proclamation!* just seems to get better with each issue. I have many relatives and friends who are still in bondage to the Adventist system and am praying for them. Being lukewarm toward the truth of the gospel along with the social and family aspects of Adventism seem to be the biggest hurdles. Also the cultic qualities keep them from searching for the truth.

I find it thrilling to see Adventist pastors such as Greg Taylor and Clay Peck find the truth of the

Scriptures and have the courage to step out of comfortable salaries into an unknown future.

May the Lord continue to bless your important ministry. Keep up the good work.

Vic Westover

Please refrain

The magazine you sent me has a plot similar to the check-out counter geek books. Please refrain from sending any more of these to my address as they will be tossed into the nearest trashcan.

Discontinue sending

Please discontinue sending *Proclamation!* to us. God have mercy on you all in the Day of Judgment. You'll need it!!

Reflections on abortion

The writer of the letter (Nov./Dec. 2004) that attempted to refute the *Proclamation!* article against abortion was somewhat misinformed about the nature of humans, having stated that "it is the SOUL, not the body, that is created in the image of God and endowed with certain inalienable rights." The Bible does not single out which part of "man" is made in the image of God. Instead it simply says that "man" is made in the image of God... Furthermore, regarding the writer's assertion that the soul does not exist prior to the seventh month of pregnancy, I wonder what the author makes of the birth of John the Baptist, who was said to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb (Lk. 1:15). The absurd question then comes up, did the Holy Spirit wait until John's seventh month before filling him? The answer of course is no, for in his sixth month inside Elizabeth, he leapt at the voice of Mary the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:36, 41)... God says to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you (Jeremiah 1:5), and David realizes, "You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps. 139:13)... The apostles may not have needed to comment on abortion simply because they commented abundantly on sexual and familial responsibility. Besides all this, if abortion were fine to the Jews of old, it might have saved King David and Bathsheba a lot of trouble.

Instead of making blanket generalizations about when life really begins, each of us needs to simply face God for ourselves and trust Him, following His voice no matter what our situation. He will be faithful to guard what is entrusted to Him.

Romone Romero

LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR CLARITY OR SPACE

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
PO Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

Throwing Jesus out with the bath water

Thank you for your excellent article explaining the human element in the transmission of Scriptures. There are two great errors made with regard to inspiration—the liberal denial of the divine element and the conservative failure to recognize the human element. Walter Rea's problems with Ellen White come partially from a misunderstanding of the nature of inspiration...

It is clear that Ellen White, in common with devotional writers, drew from a common well of spiritual materials. She respected the insights of other Christians. Devotional books are not usually footnoted. Ellen White's early writings are not nearly as sublime as her later writings after she was enriched by new insights or righteousness by faith... Perhaps her most serious sin was denial of the extent of her literary borrowing. Yet her life was phenomenal in what she accomplished—writing the history of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, guidance in health, education, and ministry, and establishing institutions all over the world.

I am saddened that many of your correspondents failed to find Jesus in the Adventist Church. We struggle like any other church. But I challenge your readers to read again the great classics—*Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Steps to Christ*—and they will experience a close walk with God. To throw these out is to throw Jesus out with the bath water. **Beatrice Neal**

Editor's Note: Actually, many former Adventists did find Jesus in the Adventist church—or rather, were found by Him. He did not, however, leave us where he found us but guided us into the freedom of the pure gospel. Ellen White's classics were not necessary in order for Christians who lived before the 1840's to have intimate relationships with Jesus. The Adventist church itself says that her writings are not equal with Scripture. Scripture testifies of Jesus (John 5:39) and is all we need to teach us truth and to guide us into relationship with Him.

My journey Home SHONTAY GIPSON

I became a Christian when I was 13 and have been in love with Jesus since forever. It was the church people, not the idea of Jesus, that upset me so much. I walked away from regular church attendance at the age of 19 and was determined never to step foot inside another church unless God showed up at my door!

I had just moved into my first apartment a few years later and was living what I thought was a "good life." I was working, had nice things including a sweet live-in boyfriend, and was enjoying a steady relationship with marijuana. I had been in my little home for about two months when Alice showed up at my door. I knew she

On May 28, 2004, a friend was driving me to work and posed an odd question. "Shontay," he said, "do you think that Adventism is all there is?"

had something to do with Jesus...and I also knew she was not a Jehovah's Witness.

Alice asked me if I was interested in Bible studies. I spoke honestly and said "No." She was still very kind and offered to come again some other time. That same day I had received a flyer in the mail announcing a seminar to be held on the book of Revelation. After Alice left, my boyfriend told me that he had been raised an Adventist, and he said the Adventist church supported the seminar.

I had heard of Adventism once before, but I was not sure what it was. My boyfriend and I decided to go together to the meetings. The seminar (to say the least) was educational and awesome. I really thought I was learning new Bible truths. When I think back on those times, I am in awe of God's hand on my life—even then.

I was baptized into Adventism on August 19, 2000, along with over 250 other "new converts." My mother protested vehemently, but I threw myself into the lifestyle. My boyfriend was promptly moved out, and God deliv-

ered me from my craving for marijuana. I began keeping the Sabbath, I refrained from pork, and tried really hard to give up all meat. I became a Sabbath School teacher and finally enrolled at Oakwood College.

It was there I was blessed with wonderful relationships that will grow with me until Jesus Christ returns. It was there that my love for God's people grew and swelled again to great proportions.

On May 28, 2004, a friend was driving me to work and posed an odd question. "Shontay," he said, "do you think that Adventism is all there is?"

I was baffled. I had been frustrated that my growth was limited and had been earnestly seeking God's direction for the past five months. The Lord had been dealing with my heart about loving Him exclusively. I was not shocked by the question. I was shocked by who was asking it—a friend who had been an Adventist pastor but who was himself struggling with the things he was learning about the religion.

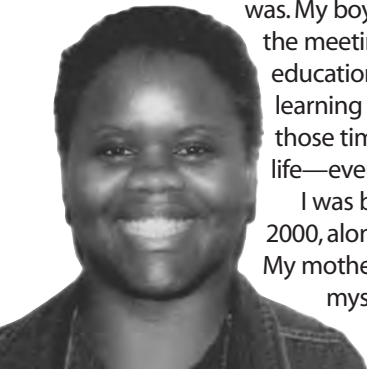
Over the span of 15 minutes, he began to convey information he had found. He had been praying about it and said that the Lord had awakened him that morning and had told him to give the information he had found to me.

When we reached my job, he handed me several stapled sets of paper. During the day, in the time I had between the phone calls and people-greeting that define my work, I read those documents. I began searching websites and devoured the information I was finding about Ellen White and Adventism. God led me to the sites, especially www.truthorfables.com, and by the time I left for home, I knew I had to leave Adventism.

I have not been the same since. I am now a non-denominational Christian and am building my life again. I still have a few Adventist friends who don't badger me for leaving but are more inclined to ask, "Why." I am praying for direction and guidance for each of them and also for myself.

I pray that my life brings God honor and glory. I do not intend to berate and bash Adventists, but I intend to speak truth as it is in the holy Word of God.

May each of you be blessed as you continue on your journey home.



Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

PO Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
CITY, STATE
PERMIT No. ####